

# GUIDE

Official Publication of  
Paulist Institute for Religious Research

## THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE IN SERMONS AND INSTRUCTIONS

William P. O'Keeffe

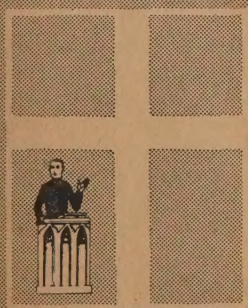
✓ CONVERT WORK:

AN EXCHANGE OF VIEWS

William J. Awalt

*II. Penance  
renewed conscience  
341*

NOVEMBER 1961, No. 162



1165  
T. REV. MSGR.  
JOSEPH J. MULLEN, STD  
227 ANSEL RD.  
LEVELAND 8, OHIO





IT SEEMS TO ME

## Voice of the Laity

The Apostolate to non-Catholics, and most other apostolates, require a laity that is informed, responsible and articulate. The editors of *The Sign* (October, 1961) made a highly significant contribution to this objective which you might well read and ponder.

With a view to suggestions for the coming Ecumenical Council, they invited Donald J. Thorman, Managing editor of *Ave Maria*, to discuss "What Lay People Want in the Church." Nine other devoted, capable lay people were asked to add their thoughts on the same theme.

Although every suggestion they offer is worthy of closest attention, the fact that a leading Catholic periodical should consult them and feature their views is noteworthy. It marks a long step away from the extreme paternalism which too often characterized our attitude to the layman. Let's hope it accelerates a trend that will bring the faithful into active, vocal partnership with the clergy in advancing Christ's cause in our perilous times.

One of Mr. Thorman's suggestions deals with the question of consulting the laity regarding the needs of the Church and establishing a procedure whereby "suggestions, comments or criticisms by responsible members of the laity" might be passed on to their bishops and pastors.

Someone has said that it is a sorry home where a child cannot make known his needs and legitimate desires to his father.

Over ten years ago, the late Pope Pius XII agreed with this view when he spoke "about public opinion within the fold of the Church—about things that can be left open to discussion, of course. Only people who know little or nothing about the Catholic Church will be surprised to hear this. For she, too, is a living body, and there would be something missing from her life if there were no public opinion within her, a defect for which pastors as well as the faithful would be responsible. . . ."

JOHN T. MCGINN, C.S.P.

---

### GUIDE, No. 162, November, 1961.

Published 10 times a year (monthly except June-July, August-September when bi-monthly) by The Missionary Society of St. Paul the Apostle in the State of New York, 411 West 59th Street, New York 19, N. Y. Second class postage paid at New York, N. Y. Rates 1 year, \$1.00; 10¢ a copy; 5¢ a copy in bulk to Seminarians.

# The Sacrament of Penance in Sermons and Instructions

By William P. O'Keeffe

What I have to say on Penance may well add nothing to my fellow-priests' store of knowledge and yet it could make very valuable reading-matter for them. We all know the Ten Commandments, yet it does us good to read them and the Examination of Conscience occasionally, because, of course, the continued awareness of these is a means to a very necessary end.

Now the priest who has to preach and teach on Penance or who has to hear confessions cannot escape the personal moral consequences of such duties. If he neglects them or is careless in fulfilling them, he must himself do penance for the fault or be answerable for it in Judgment. And so he stands only to gain by casting a meditative eye over the laws of the priestly ministry, over the rubrics that Pope Paul V terms in the introduction to the Ritual "the public and most solemn (*obsignata*) norm" for the administration of the sacred rites. The priest may be moved thereby to preach and teach more effectively or, at least, be the more firmly convinced himself of the power and the glory of this great sacrament of Penance that, as priest, he dispenses for the salvation of other souls and that, as his mother's son, he receives for the salvation of his own soul.

In the very first sentence of the section on the Sacrament of Penance in the Ritual there occurs a phrase that should make us all think: "*eo diligentius administrandum est, quo frequentior est ejus usus*," which surely implies, by the fact that it refers to the administration rather than to the reception of the sacraments, that devout penitents who are aiming at high holiness deserves the best in, and from, confessors.

But perhaps it is not fair of me to give

this phrase without quoting the full sentence in which it occurs:

*Sanctum Poenitentiae Sacramentum, ad eos, qui post Baptismum lapsi sunt, in gratiam Dei restituendos a Christo Domino institutum, eo diligentius administrandum est, quo frequentior est ejus usus, et quo plura requiruntur ad illud recte digneque tractandum ac suscipiendum.*

This is a sentence well deserving of being brooded over. Although it refers to Penance in its institution, administration and reception, it does not mention the word sin or the forgiveness of sin and it refers to sinners under the kindly and merciful metaphor of *lapsi*! All of which points out something about the sacrament of Penance that well deserves to be emphasized and that is often overlooked, namely that Penance is intended to restore the grace of God to the soul. All too often, I fear, we preach and teach the less noble aspect of the sacrament, the merely judicial element, the removal of guilt. The Ritual, however, reminds us that there is something more than the divine justice at work in the tribunal of Penance:

*In primis meminerit Confessarius, se iudicis pariter—a very significant conjunction—et medici personam sustinere, ac divinae justitiae simul—the same idea—et misericordiae ministerium a Deo constitutum esse, ut tamquam arbiter inter Deum et homines, honori divino et et animarum saluti consulat.*

Although forgiveness comes by grace, there is more in grace (the sacramental grace of Penance) than forgiveness: there is restoration to friendship with, even to sonship of, the Eternal Father. One cannot help recalling the tremendous sentence in which St. Thomas discusses the functioning of justice in this sacrament and shows that underneath the grim trappings of a legal tribunal and despite the sordidness of the of-



fenses that are brought before the judge there, Penance is permeated through with the good will of God and designed to re-establish us in His friendship:

"In vindictive justice the atonement is made according to the judge's decision, and not according to the discretion of the offender or of the person offended; whereas in Penance the offense is atoned according to the will of the sinner, and the judgment of God against whom the sin was committed, because in the latter case we seek not only the restoration of the equality, as in the case of vindictive justice, but also *and still more* the reconciliation of friendship, which is accomplished by the offender making atonement according to the will of the person offended." (S.T. III, 90, 2; Dominican translation)

### THE BEAUTY OF PENANCE

And in another famous passage the Angelic Doctor even grows lyrical about the beauty of Penance:

"By sin, man loses a twofold dignity, one in respect of God, the other in respect of the Church. In respect of God he again loses a twofold dignity. One is his principal dignity, whereby he was counted among the children of God and this he recovers by Penance, which is signified (Luke 15) in the prodigal son, for when he repented, his father commanded that the first garment should be restored to him, together with a ring and shoes. The other is his secondary dignity, viz. innocence, of which, as we read in the same chapter, the elder son boasted saying (verse 29): 'Behold, for so many years do I serve thee, and I have never transgressed thy commandments'; and this dignity the penitent cannot recover. Nevertheless he recovers something greater sometimes; because, as Gregory says, those who acknowledge themselves to have strayed away from God, make up for their past losses by subsequent gains: so that there is more joy in heaven on their account, even as in battle, the commanding officer thinks more of the soldier who, after running away, returns and bravely attacks the foe, than of one who has never turned his back, but has done nothing brave. . . ."

It is not fair to the faithful to harp almost exclusively in our preaching on the negative, sin-remissive aspects of the sacrament of Penance, neglecting what is, so to speak,

positive in it, viz. that it re-establishes us again in the grace and friendship of God and enables us once more, or with better right, to call God our Father. The meaner homiletic or instruction is clearly not in accordance with the concept of Penance given in the Ritual; it reveals a theology that is as plebeian as it is uninspiring.

In one of the finest spiritual books that have appeared in recent years, *The Blessed Trinity and the Sacraments*, by Father Taymans d'Eypernon, S.J., Professor of Theology at Louvain, published in 1961 by the Newman Press, the author says:

"It is no calumny on Christendom to state that a large percentage of believers, even quite devout people, look on Penance as a kind of second-class sacrament. Undoubtedly its purpose is to restore life and this should give it a dignity all its own as the divine instrument of forgiveness. But it is the inglorious multitude of sinners (to which we all belong) that provides the claimants for this spiritual wealth and because of this, as well as because of the embarrassing self-accusation one has to make before a priest (in whom all too often one fails to see the minister of Jesus Christ), this sacrament is tainted somewhat by the common attitude to the guilt it is intended to remove. Compared with the Holy Eucharist, which speaks only of the graces of union with God, compared with the sacraments of Order or Matrimony, compared even with Baptism (which is itself a sacrament of the Dead but so tremendously connotative of spiritual rebirth, the divinization of man by the Father, Son and Holy Ghost), Penance cuts a very poor figure indeed. It lacks the dynamism of Confirmation, that charges the Christian with the task of reforming the world: it is not even pathetic like Extreme Unction, the sacrament that prepares man for death. Penance suggests only what is sordid and unattractive, the wash-house for dirty linen, the clinic where the wretched congregate.

"It seems a shame that it should be so, especially in view of the fact that the Ritual suggests a far more noble and inspiring notion of Penance and the Angel of the Schools shows himself unusually felicitous in fitting noble words to wonderful ideas when treating of this sacrament."

In a modern German spiritual book entitled *Our Way to God* there is an attractive presentation of the sacrament of Penance, on which I intend to base what I have



to say in this article. The author of this work, Dr. Franz Michel Willam, seeks first of all, in dealing with the sacraments, to set before us what Christ had in mind when He instituted the sacraments, for, quite obviously, we stand to profit most by the sacraments when our part in them is precisely what their Founder wished us to contribute.

Regarding few of the sacraments did Christ reveal His mind so fully as in relation to Penance, for both by His behavior and by His words He made it clear that nobody could have such a sympathetic understanding of the sinner as He had and that nobody was so truly the friend of sinners as He who came to shed His Blood for them.

"I am not come to call the just, but sinners to repentance. . . . The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which is lost." (Mark 2:17; Luke 19:10). Christ's whole life demonstrated the truth of these assertions. Because He was so concerned about the welfare of the neglected multitudes and, in particular, because He sought to teach them the truths of salvation in a way that would be adapted to their simple, uneducated minds, it is to be expected that many of His parables would deal with a most fundamental problem of their spiritual life, the problem of sin and repentance, and would therefore have a profound bearing on the interpretation of the sacrament of Penance. It is well known that the Fathers of the Church have held that the parables of the Lost Sheep and the Prodigal Son reveal Our Lord's attitude to the sinner and contain the kernel of His doctrine on Penance.

## PARABLE OF MERCY

Before going on to develop Dr. Willam's application of the parable of the Prodigal Son to the sacrament of Penance, I cannot forbear quoting from a book (to which I shall refer again) viz. *Priest and Penitent* by John Carmel Heenan, D.D., for in it there is a paragraph on this parable that is a model of concise and convincing exposition. Here it is:

"There are few more touching stories in the sermons of Our Blessed Lord than His tender description of the return of the Prodigal. The young man was determined, as we should say, 'to sow his wild oats.' In many ways he was a particularly unlovable boy. He seems to have been rather crude in his

demand for his portion of the father's substance. He collected the money and, apparently with very little pain at the parting, he left his father's house and family. He went to a foreign land and proved so unfaithful to the traditions of his Hebrew home that, if he did not actually eat of forbidden dishes, he was content to feed upon the husks of swine, unclean animals according to his code. 'Riotous living' was the description applied by Our Lord to his behavior during his travels. Reduced to dishonorable poverty, his thoughts returned to his father's house. He realized that his unhappy condition was far more degrading than that of the meanest of the hired servants in his father's household. He endured a bitter struggle with his own pride. He could picture an angry father and a self-righteous elder brother. Finally he decided to return home, not as a son but as a beggar ready to be treated as a servant. He did not understand the meaning of true fatherhood. Long before the son's approach, the father had sighted him and, far from desiring to give voice to just anger, was overjoyed at the Prodigal's return. He caused fine garments to be prepared and the fatted calf to be killed. At his elder brother's reproach that he who had proved faithful had never received such signs of affection, the father could only repeat: 'My son that was lost is found, was dead and is come to life.'

"The ministers of God who act in the name of the Church perform their duty by the Church's command in a like spirit. The path of the penitent is made easy. Not only is his secret safe, but his approach to reconciliation is made joyful. It is the homecoming of a Prodigal Son."

Returning to Dr. Willam: as he sees it, the penitent's part in the sacrament of Penance is described for us by Our Lord in the parable of the Prodigal Son, because

1. Like the Prodigal, the penitent must begin by entering into himself and reflecting on his deplorable condition. (Examination of Conscience)

2. Like the Prodigal, the penitent must then regret his past folly and repudiate the degrading alliances that he has formed. (Contrition)

3. Like the Prodigal, the penitent must come to the momentous decision to go back home and stay there for the future. (Purpose of Amendment)

4. Like the Prodigal, the penitent must

confess his sins before Heaven and his father. (Confession)

5. Like the Prodigal, the penitent must be prepared to make reparation for his misdeeds. (Satisfaction).

And Dr. William concludes this part of his exposition with the following sentences:

"The sacrament of Penance is the Tribunal of Divine Mercy. In this Tribunal it depends more on the accused than on the judge whether the sentence will be one of pardon or of condemnation. If a sinner repents of his crimes, for love of God or holiness, then will he be purified in the Blood of Jesus; as the Holy Scripture says: if your sins be red as scarlet, they will be made white as snow. (Is. 1:18).

*The Sacrament of Penance is the Sacrament by which we become again the children of the Heavenly Father through the atoning Blood of Jesus Christ."*

Turning now to deal with the various parts of the sacrament of Penance in detail, the author of *Our Way to God* is, perhaps, not always obtrusively reminding us of the *mens Christi*, but that is nevertheless definitely his purpose: he sees Penance in the context of the Prodigal's history and his homiletic of Penance has in it something of the simplicity of the parable.

## EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

The Prodigal would never have risen from the degradation and squalor of his servitude, if he had not begun to reflect on his folly. His father would not have had the joy of welcoming him home, if the Prodigal had not entered into himself and reminded himself of the contrast between his present lot and that of even the menials in his father's house. That demanded considerable sincerity and humility on the Prodigal's part, but humility and sincerity come more easily to one who has been crushed by tribulation and who has consequently, little to lose by candor—which, incidentally, is one reason why the Lord "chastiseth whom He loveth." (Hebrews 12:6).

Self-examination and self-condemnation are not welcome or gratifying tasks and few of us can be humble enough or sincere enough with ourselves to succeed in them unless we are enlightened and helped by the grace of the Holy Spirit. Therefore we should earnestly beg that grace in preparing ourselves for the sacrament of Penance.

One of the most profitable of spiritual practices is the daily examination of conscience, because it brings the sacrament of Penance to bear on our daily lives. This daily glance at our conduct will sometimes prove more beneficial if it is directed at the "how" as well as the "what" of our behavior, if we ask ourselves not just "what have I done?" but "how have I done what I have done?"

How have I worked, prayed, played during the day?

How have I behaved toward God, myself, my neighbor?

How have I behaved regarding the members of my own family or outsiders?

How have I behaved toward superiors, equals, inferiors?

How have I reacted in grief and in gladness?

## SORROW

The Prodigal's reflection on his wretchedness led him to regret his impulsive, improvident folly. So too the sinner, remembering not only his sins but the consequences of them, will by God's grace come to deplore his folly in yielding to self-love and rebelling against the holy will of God.

Sorrow is said to be perfect when it springs from the love of God, imperfect when it is founded more on fear. The sorrow that is based on the love of God is perfect precisely because it is unselfish and spells the death of that self-love that can beget sin. But to admire and strive after perfect sorrow should not make us despise its less noble relation, for the sorrow that springs from fear and is not quite free from self-love can be truly a saving sorrow and suffices for the sacrament of Penance. Furthermore it should be noted that both kinds of sorrow may co-exist in the same heart, for in this as in so many other things one may be motivated by a variety of reasons. Self-interest played no small part in the conversion of the Prodigal; realizing his own misery, he recalled also how much better off were the mere servants in his father's house. And the Church does not set before us only the motives for perfect sorrow; it keeps us reminded of the grim reality of Hell and of what we lose by sin, Heaven and the company of the Blessed, just as it sets before us the goodness of the Almighty and the gracious mercy of that Father who sent His Son to ransom us in His Blood.



Still by our sins, O Lord, we grieve  
Thy love, so full of pardon free:  
Author of mercy, still reprieve  
The souls that turn again to thee.

Remember when our fashion came,  
F frail creatures, yet thy creatures still;  
Crush, for the glory of thy name,  
The murmurings of our stubborn will.

The guilt that dooms us put away,  
With larger grace our prayers require;  
At last, and ever from this day,  
Teach us to live as in thy sight.

*(Lenten hymn by St. Gregory;  
tr. by Magr. R. Knier)*

## PURPOSE OF AMENDMENT

The man who goes to a railway station and buys himself a ticket will have all that labor and expense in vain unless he brings himself to go a step further toward reaching his destination by taking the right train. In the same way the person who is sorry for his sins and wants to return to God must take all the necessary steps in that direction. The Prodigal would have only increased his misery and to no profit, if he had done no more than reflect on his wretchedness and bewail it. In other words, self-examination and sorrow may add up to more than despair. Judas realized that he had sinned and he regretted it bitterly, but, unlike that of St. Peter and the Prodigal, the remorse of Judas only filled him with such misery that death seemed preferable to a life haunted by the torturing memories of his folly in "betraying innocent blood." His was a sorrow that did not lead God-ward, to the Heavenly Father. Real sorrow must issue forth in godly resolution; mere feelings can be very illusory. And that is what the Church has in mind in telling us that we deceive ourselves if we think we can have sufficient sorrow for our sins while we persist in remaining in a situation where we are morally certain to continue to sin.

## CONFESSION

The sacrament of Baptism forges a link not only between the soul and God, but also between the soul and the Church. We are children of God only when we are children of Holy Mother Church. But this

double link is destroyed by mortal sin. When grace is lost, when the divine sonship terminates in the soul, the vital bond between that soul and the Church is also snapped. The sinner is a dead member in the Body of Christ. And so Our Lord laid it down that it is not enough for the sinner to try to restore the *status quo ante* with God by duly repenting of his sin, he must also (by confessing the sin to the priest, who is at one and the same time the minister of Christ and the representative of the Church) renew the other Baptismal bond also, the connection with the life of the Church in Christ.

When Christ gave the Church the power to forgive sins (John 20:19-23) He implied that it should be used with discrimination, for otherwise the power He gave of withholding absolution would be meaningless. But no such discrimination can be exercised between such as are and such as are not deserving of forgiveness, unless sinners lay bare their consciences in a sincere and adequate confession to the accredited representatives of the Church, i.e., to priests duly appointed to hear confessions.

It should also be noted that confession gives us an opportunity of exercising the self-abasement that has the power to release certain psychological tensions associated with guilt. Dr. Haenan, the Bishop of Leeds, in the book from which I have quoted already, says:

"The value of unburdening the mind is a commonplace of present-day psychology. It is part of our nature to desire to unburden ourselves of any worry. When we have consciously done any serious wrong, we feel lonely, almost outcasts. We feel particularly unworthy in the presence of those who believe us to be innocent. It restores self-respect to have a priest before whom we may humble ourselves. To him we can frankly admit our guilt. We acknowledge our weakness in the certain knowledge that he will be able to strengthen us to rise."

In *Bomber Pilot*, the early autobiography of Group Captain Leonard Cheshire, V.C., D.S.O., D.F.C., written when he was still a non-Catholic, the author tells of four air-men adrift in a dinghy in the Atlantic:

"As the hours went by and the fury of the waves continued unabated, a chilled silence slowly enveloped the dinghy. One by one each of the four men had bared his soul. One by one they had recounted the

story of their lives: not the story that you or I recount to our sweethearts or in a sudden burst of confidence, but the story of their souls; the story of their petty hates and their jealousies and their prides: in other words, the one and only story in the world that they had thought would die with them, forever untold. But now that this was over, now that each man had looked up to God and offered up, as it were, an apology for being human, there remained only memories and silence. . . ."

## SATISFACTION

By the time the Prodigal had reached home, he had also journeyed far in the moral order. Interiorly he had advanced from an egotistical, cynical realization of his own lot, as compared with that of his father's servants, to a love that recognized both his father's worth and his own worthlessness. He wanted by serving his father to make reparation for his earlier ingratitude. So with us, but there is even a still deeper reason for the satisfaction that completes the sacrament of Penance.

This sacrament is Christ's Easter gift to

the Church. Sins can be forgiven only because Christ died on the Cross. And His Resurrection, that followed on His Passion and Death, mystically prefigures our sacramental resurrection from the death of sin to the life of grace. Furthermore, this sacrament restores the sinner to the Church as well as to God: both can say: "This my son is come to life again; was lost and is found." Now, in the imposition and fulfilment of the sacramental penance something of all these profound realities is expressed. In the first place, the penance shows forth the triumph of Christ's grace over the forces of evil, for by performing his penance the sinner gives proof of the new life, grace, that is in him. Moreover, he does so at the command of the priest, thus demonstrating the reality of the renewed link between himself and the Church. And finally, by his self-denial in performing the penance, he indicates something of the manner in which he was redeemed, according to the Pauline formula: "I rejoice in my sufferings, and fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh, for his body, which is the Church." (Col. 1:24).

■ ■ ■

# Convert Work: An Exchange of Views

By William J. Awalt

In all our dioceses and parishes we need a thoroughly planned program for converts. The millions of Americans outside the Church and the fewness of our converts (not to mention the considerable leakage) make such a program imperative. Father O'Brien has discussed the larger aspects of this topic. I'd simply like to present, in outline form, a few elements in such a program.

## I. REMOTE PREPARATION

Our apostolate will succeed in the measure that we stimulate a campaign of prayer for conversions and to the extent that our

people recognize their obligation and opportunities to win converts. Practically all our priestly work can serve this purpose.

1. Daily Mass. Make a specific memento for the apostolate. Make a brief announcement concerning the Mass of the day, relating this to the local class, its need of grace and of the laity's interest and co-operation.

2. Preaching. The sermon at Sunday Mass is where we best meet most of our parishioners and can affect their thinking. Gospel and Epistle constantly suggest apostolic themes. Occasionally preaching at devotions permits us to dwell at greater length on the needs of non-Catholics, our apostolic



duties toward them and our local efforts to instruct them.

3. Parochial School. Give prayer cards to all the children so that they will pray for the inquiry class. Besides winning grace, there is scarcely a better way to train them to be convert-minded. We often teach them catechism. Why not give each lesson a "slant" toward the apostolate? The mysteries of faith are not merely to be known and treasured. They are to be shared with the whole world.

4. Confession. Here is an opportunity to request the prayers of our penitents.

5. Communion Calls. The sick and shut-ins can be requested to offer up their sufferings for the inquiry class. Ask their aid for difficult cases. In an occasional letter, report on the progress of the class and how much their assistance is needed.

## II. PUBLICITY

The aim is to reach every favorably disposed non-Catholic, giving the basic information about the class, in such a way as to persuade them to enroll. Many non-Catholics are interested in the Church and we have a plan to facilitate their instruction. Publicity is the bridge between their need and our established plan to satisfy their need.

1. Mixed Marriages. A personal letter of invitation from the pastor is often sufficient to bring many of them to the course. These letters may be typed individually or processed in quantity. Appearance is important. No one is favorably impressed by a blurred or indistinct letter. The parish census cards provide a ready-made list. And the letter of invitation can be repeated before each new course until the person finally decides to attend.

2. Signs and Handbills. Call on the talent of parishioners who are in advertising work or who have taken an arts course. Place an attractive sign outside the church to attract passers-by. Place a smaller placard in the vestibule of the church as a reminder to our lay people. Handbills of odd shapes and different colors, with catchy phrases and attractive illustrations can be most effective.

3. Open House. This growing annual parish practice brings our non-Catholic neighbors to tour the church, visit convent and school and meet informally the priests and nuns. It "breaks the ice" and is an excellent means of contact with good prospects.

4. Establish a Tradition. Parishes where the inquiry class has been functioning for some time become known for their charitable interest in sincere inquirers. Non-Catholics either know personally or hear of others who have taken instructions there. Catholics immediately think of such a parish when their non-Catholic associates reach a point where systematic instructions are to be recommended. It takes time to establish such a tradition, so we should not be discouraged if attendance is small in the first few courses.

## III. ENLIST THE LAITY

1. Pulpit Announcements. The Catholic laity know intimately those non-Catholics who manifest interest in the Church. Recruiting good prospects for the class is largely a question of persuading the laity to invite and to accompany these non-Catholic relatives, neighbors or friends to enroll. Hence the prime importance of the pulpit announcement explaining the advantages of the class, especially on those Sundays preceding the opening of a new course.

2. Parish Societies. Ready-made committees for various tasks can be formed from our existing societies like the C.C.D., Holy Name, Legion of Mary, etc. In many parishes, they finance wide-spread publicity, provide books and pamphlets, act as receptionists or librarians and handle the visual aids. The more lay people who are actively engaged, the larger the attendance and greater results achieved.

3. Sponsors. They should be selected early in the course. The sponsor should, in general, act as a big brother to the inquirer. He can answer occasional questions; explain obscure points of teaching and practice; give coaching in the use of prayerbook or Missal; and conduct the inquirer on a tour of the church. Later on, he can explain the details of going to Confession and Communion and how to attend Mass. This lay person can act as a co-instructor, especially by covering those lessons the inquirer misses unavoidably. He should encourage the inquirer to start going to Mass early in the course and accompanying him each Sunday.

---

Monsignor Awalt's remarks and the ensuing discussion followed a paper by Father John A. O'Brien at the Second National Conference on Convert Work, Paulist Seminary, Washington, D. C., October, 1959.



When the time comes, he can stand close at the catechumen's baptism and at his first Confession and Communion. Afterwards, he can help the convert to select and join some parish Society or activity, such as the local Convert Guild. He should sustain this interest until the convert is thoroughly at home in the Church.

#### IV. FLEXIBILITY IN SCHEDULES

Many people do not find the customary time for classes convenient (i.e., two evenings a week at 8 P. M.). They often start with good intentions but later are forced to drop out reluctantly. In an area where there are a number of classes organized, a variety of days and hours could be offered providing greater convenience.

1. A number of people would prefer to come once a week rather than twice a week.

2. People who work in the evening, attend school at night, or prefer not to be out in the evening in certain areas, might be accommodated by inquiry classes that meet in the daytime or on week-ends.

3. Mothers who come in the afternoon to pick up their children after school, could be persuaded to attend an afternoon class.

4. Many dioceses employ a co-ordinated advertising program. Newspaper ads and throwaways list all the places where courses are conducted. This enables an inquirer to choose the class which suits best his convenience regarding location and time.

The Apostolate to non-Catholics in the United States is beginning to show good results from imaginative experimentation. It will advance even more rapidly if we share our experiences and bring a measure of co-ordination to our work in the various areas of the nation. And it has been a delight to hear from Father O'Brien on how these procedures have developed over the years.

#### Digest of Discussion:

Father John T. McGinn, C.S.P., requested Father Paul Collis of Bloomfield, N. J., to discuss his method of enlisting the co-operation of parish societies in the winning of converts.

Father Collis replied that he has copied the basic procedures of Father Frank Stone of Toronto with regard to the operation of the class. This includes the use of the laity

as co-instructors and lay responsibility for registration, etc.

So far as recruitment of prospects for the class is concerned, he explained that he begins with the parish board meeting. This brings together regularly the representatives of the various societies for concerted action on some specific parish project. He announces the opening of a new class, the object, time of opening and especially the need of the co-operation of the whole parish in inviting non-Catholics or Catholics who would be helped by further instruction.

His parish is divided into nineteen sections. Some Catholic in each of these sections is requested to invite to his home ten other Catholics in that section on a definite evening. A group of three (including a priest, a layman who is an advertiser, along with one of the parish converts) then speaks to this small group of laity requesting the names of non-Catholics or lapsed Catholics near their home. Similar talks are made from the pulpit with a request for names of prospects for the class.

After these names are sorted and cards made for each, a letter is sent to each prospect with a personal invitation to the class. Shortly afterwards, a member of the telephone committee phones the prospect to repeat the invitation and to note the reaction of this person. A somewhat elaborate system of cards, with perforations indicating the different types of prospects, their individual background and attitude to the class (something like the IBM cards), has been worked out by one of the laymen. This enables the parish not only to invite people each year, but to gather a considerable amount of information about them and their attitude for future use.

Father Collis feels that each non-Catholic or lapsed Catholic is a responsibility of the priests and laity of the parish in which he resides. He is convinced that we fail to reach many of these people because our customary invitations are too vague and because we do not know these people sufficiently. Consequently, with the co-operation of his parishioners, he has developed a plan of recruitment which extends to each of these people a direct, courteous, cordial invitation, and one that is based on increasing information about each as an individual.

Monsignor H. D. Buchanan, of El Paso Texas, asked Father O'Brien if the custom of baptizing converts at the Easter Vigil is



becoming more widespread. He remarked that converts in his parish liked the practice. But it is an impressive ceremony and calls the attention of the whole parish to the obligation to spread the faith. The Profession of Faith may be made sometime before the service. Father O'Brien answered that he was happy to see the growth of this practice and noted its effect in stimulating and extending the zeal of Catholics in this apostolate. He knows of nine parishes where this practice is well established and where it has helped to call effective attention to the whole apostolate to non-Catholics.

Monsignor Nienaber of Lexington, Ky., spoke of some developments which gave promise of rich results in souls. 1. He told of the value of a three-day closed retreat for non-Catholics. These retreats have been held for three years in his section of the country with great success. Many non-Catholics are conscious of the need of some kind of retirement for prayer and spiritual stock-taking. The rush, noise and hectic nature of our times makes them eager for just the kind of change offered by a closed retreat. Many of them have never made anything like a retreat in their lives and benefit greatly by the exercises. Many of these people, after a retreat, enroll in an inquiry class. The Legion of Mary and the Guild of St. Paul are especially successful in winning prospective retreatants.

Monsignor Nienaber called attention to a new text and music for a High Mass that was prepared by a convert of his acquaintance. Its merit is simplicity and can be learned easily by any congregation. This and other helpful aids may be obtained at the Guild of St. Paul, Lexington, Ky.

#### DOORBELL APOSTOLATE

Monsignor Awalt asked Father O'Brien about the possibility of arousing animosity by the door-to-door campaigns carried on in different dioceses. Might not Protestants inaugurate similar campaigns and thus win Catholics to their own Protestant churches?

Father O'Brien replied that door-to-door campaigns by various Protestant groups have long been a common practice. It is not unusual for a minister to call on a new family that moves into his neighborhood. And various groups have adopted this as a regular practice. (Editor's note. Those interested may want to read "Visitation Evan-

gelism in America" by A. Karl Boehnke, *Concordia Theological Monthly*, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo., August, September and October of 1957. The writer believes that this practice accounts for the rapid growth of Protestant churches in America during the past five years.)

Father O'Brien pointed out that Catholic canvassers are instructed to be courteous and tactful. They are told to respect the wishes and privacy of those they visit. If they are received in friendly fashion, they simply say "if you would like to attend a Catholic Information Forum, you will be made most welcome." Some people are agreeably surprised at this invitation. And while the Catholic canvasser always offers literature, he never tries to force it on those unwilling to receive it. In the vast majority of cases, Catholics are received cordially and politely.

One case of counter action taken by Protestants was in Raleigh, N. C. During a campaign in that state, Bishop Waters wrote letters inviting non-Catholics, who showed interest, to attend an inquiry class. One minister preached a sermon in which he invited Catholics who might be interested to attend his church. Some reaction like this is always possible, but actually is very rare.

Father O'Brien mentioned a case where a Protestant group took up a census. The minister afterwards turned over to the local priest the names (on cards with pertinent information) of 500 Catholics who were unknown to their pastor. Fifty per cent of these persons were involved in invalid marriages, of which half could be rectified. The other half were not practicing Catholics because of faulty training or carelessness. The pastor remarked ironically to Father O'Brien that out of his current inquiry class he would probably baptize twenty-five converts. Yet five hundred people had meanwhile slipped out of the Church.

⑤ Father Donald H. Knapp, of the Youngstown diocese, observed that he found two classes a week to present difficulties to inquirers. Some could not easily leave small children, others were deterred by their jobs. Because of this, he conducts his class once a week for a period of six months. Furthermore, he believed that this practice gives inquirers more time to assimilate the matter taught. This also makes it easier to provide make-up classes for people who miss a lesson unavoidably.

W.C. Butler  
Father O'Brien conceded that various reasons might justify different customs and that quite a few priests conduct inquiry classes once a week. He strongly favored holding two classes each week. 1. This method allows us to hold four complete courses a year. Many convert centers—especially the Gesu in Milwaukee—have established the principle that this is the most productive in the number of converts won.

2. The high mobility of people in urban areas makes it preferable to cover the lessons in three rather than six months.

3. He believed that two lessons a week was more in accord with the way people learn. When one lesson is divided by a whole week from the next, the continuity becomes blurred and a longer review is needed. If people are persuaded to concen-

trate on the course, reading from selected books as well as in the catechism, they can easily digest the truths we teach. It is a matter of curtailing other reading for the period of the course for some thirty minutes each day.

4. Remember that there are over 100,000,000 people to be won in our country. We have to get on with that prodigious task, and should choose the method that will facilitate that task without undue haste or delay.

At the request of both Fathers McGinn and O'Brien the attending priests were asked, by a show of hands, how many held one class a week, and how many held them twice a week. Approximately sixty per cent followed the practice of one class a week with forty per cent scheduling two classes a week.

Curry: 1 class a week?



---

## READING I'VE LIKED

How did the apostles themselves come to believe in the divinity of our Lord? *Son and Saviour*, a symposium by scholars like A. Gelin, P. Benoit and others, traces the steps that led Christ's chosen ones to this central belief. This volume, with its rich insights into the New Testament evidence, invaluable for your instruction on the Divinity of Christ. Helicon Press. \$2.95.

The Catechetical Conference held at Eichstatt a year ago brought together 60 missionary bishops, leaders in catechetics, and workers in the missions. Some thirty papers by eminent experts on every phase of the renewal in catechetics were delivered. They are now available in *Teaching All Nations*, edited by Johannes Hofinger, S.J. Herder & Herder, \$6.95. One of the most important books to appear this year.

The Bible has ceased to be merely a best seller. People are actually reading it! And the Old Testament books as well as the new are giving new depth to Catholic preaching and catechetics. *God's Living Word* is a most readable and scholarly introduction to the mind of the scriptural writers. Sheed & Ward. \$3.95

## GUIDE

- Official publication of the *Paulist Institute for Religious Research*.
- Officers: John J. Keating, C.S.P., Director. George C. Hagmaier, C.S.P., Associate Director. Editor of *Guide*, John T. McGinn, C.S.P.
- Concerned with the theoretical and practical aspects of the Apostolate to non-Catholics.
- Published 10 times a year (monthly except for combined issues in June-July and in August-September).
- Annual subscription \$1.00. Single issues 10¢. Bulk lots to seminarians at 5¢ a copy.

## GUIDE

411 West 59th Street  
New York 19, New York



# Guide Lights

## ECUMENICAL EXPLORATION . . .

In the opinion of many, the sixtieth triennial general convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church held in Detroit last month may be recorded in the future as the great ecumenical convention of Episcopal Church history. A number of merger plans were put before it. Some, involving congregations outside the U. S. A. will certainly be acted upon. Others will be tabled. Bishop Pike remarked that in considering these mergers Christians in this country should be somewhat humble. He declared, "We brought our own sin of division to them in the first place." On the home front, both the House of Bishops and the House of Deputies approved an invitation from the United Presbyterian Church to explore a four church merger with negotiating teams from the Methodist Church and the United Church of Christ. If this comes to fruition in union, it will mean a denomination of some eighteen million.

## NEW DEPARTURE IN NEW DELHI . . .

A larger church assembly than that in Detroit will be convened in November in New Delhi. The World Council of Churches is meeting there. And, in a new departure, the Catholic Church is sending some official observers. Catholic priests and laymen have attended such meetings before, but unofficially. The observers were picked by the Vatican's Preparatory Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity. They are five in number and include one American priest, Father Edward J. Duff, S.J., of St. Louis, Mo. Father Duff has studied the work of the World Council in the social field and has described it in a book, "Social Thought of the World Council of Churches."

## MEDITERRANEAN MEETING . . .

On the Isle of Rhodes in the Eastern Mediterranean another significant conference has taken place. It was the first pan-Orthodox conference to be held in thirty years. Twelve autocephalous Orthodox churches were represented. Metropolitan Chrysostom of Philippi and Kavala presided at the sessions as representative of Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras, "first among equals" of leaders of Orthodoxy. The major task of the conference was to determine a

catalogue of subjects for a future Pre-Synod. It had before it a number of topics ranging from dogma and the participation of the laity in worship to relations with the Roman Catholic and other Christian communities. Under the topic of Orthodoxy and the Roman Catholic Church two points were listed on the agenda. The first one: "The cultivation of friendly relationships within the spirit of the Patriarchal encyclical of 1920, and more generally in accordance with the present favorable trend towards rapprochement and unity among Christian Churches." The second one: "Study of the disputable issues on which the two churches differ in reference to: 1. Faith and doctrine. 2. Administration. 3. Ecclesiastical activities such as proselytism and the Uniat movement."

## NO ROMANS IN RHODES . . .

Observers from the Anglican, the Old Catholic Church, and the World Council of Churches were present at the pan-Orthodox conference. The Vatican sent no observers, but gave permission to several priests to attend in the capacity of journalists. We can only suppose that this absence of bona fide observers was due to considerations of a larger policy in the whole matter of unity. Despite this lack of representation the Church had a profound interest in the conference. Shortly before it met and with awareness of its significance, Amleto Cardinal Cicognani, the Papal Secretary of State, made a strong appeal for efforts toward reunion of Eastern and Western Christianity. He reviewed the causes of the schism: political, liturgical, canonical, and doctrinal. And he concluded, "No responsibility can be attributed to living generations for what happened and, if we consider ourselves brothers with the faithful of the first centuries . . . then we must now proclaim and consider ourselves one in Jesus Christ with all the Christian East."

## INTERVIEW IN ISTANBUL . . .

In his desire for unity, the Cardinal Secretary of State was echoing within a Catholic dimension the sentiments of Patriarch Athenagoras. The Patriarch has long been on record as favoring a general Christian reunion, and in a recent interview in Istanbul he spoke specifically of the need for better relations between the Orthodox and the

Catholic Churches. He said, "We belong together. Peter and Andrew were brothers; one of them worked in Rome, the other in Greece. So ought we too, Catholics and Orthodox, be together and work as brothers. The door has been opened, as the Apocalypse says, and no one can close it. The door is open; we need only enter." The Patriarch said, however, that a basic prerequisite for successful conversation on unity is a knowledge and understanding of the theology of the sister church. Only in this way can the formulas be found which will do justice to the different concepts.

### THE WRIGHT WAY . . .

Bishop Wright spoke of the ecumenical movement at the Archdiocesan Teachers' Institute in Boston and gave some advice on how to aid it. "Catholics should have tact," he said, "so that the spirit of concord will hasten the day when our prayers and those of the other Christian churches will be united. We should consider where our attitudes may be offensive." He observed that the ecumenical spirit among Catholics and the movement among Protestants are necessarily different. One major difference is the Protestant opinion that there is not now one, true church, in contrast to the Catholic teaching that it is the one church. He added, "Although Catholicism is not one sect among many, this does not mean we are indifferent to reunion among Christians. We all have a part to play in creating the right climate for a change."

### A CARDINAL COMMENTS . . .

In Bern, Switzerland, Augustin Cardinal Bea, head of the Preparatory Secretariat for Christian Unity for the forthcoming Vatican Council, said that the Church will have the courage to drop what is outmoded wherever possible if it serves the cause of Christian unity. He explained that the council is not ecumenical in the Protestant sense and will not directly take up the unity question. But he said the council will definitely promote the spirit of unity. "Dogmatic principles will not be discussed," he said, "since articles of faith cannot be altered . . . and the road leading toward a peaceful meeting between Rome and Wittenberg cannot be shortened by inadmissible concessions."

On the same subject the Cardinal wrote later in *Civiltà Cattolica* that even after it was made clear that the council would not be ecumenical in the Protestant understanding, nevertheless, Protestant interest did not

lessen. It continued to be so lively, in fact that the Holy Father was able to say on one occasion that "this respectful attention comforts Us and gives Us a foretaste of the joy of the unity of all believers in Christ."

### DEPARTMENT OF STATISTICS . . .

Dr. Lee G. Burchinal of Iowa State University presented some interesting figures to the American Sociological Association meeting in St. Louis. The figures came from a survey made in Iowa on marriages which ended in divorce over the last seven years. Among 14,193 marriages where both parties were Catholics only 32 divorces resulted during the first year of marriage. Among the 52,720 marriages where both parties were Protestant there were 728 divorces in the first year. In 5,572 mixed marriages there were 126 divorces in the first year. The divorce rate per thousand in Catholic marriages over the seven year period was 46. For Protestants it was 132. In mixed marriages where the wife was a Catholic it was 205, and where the husband was a Catholic it was 207. The total for all marriages was 120 divorces per 1,000 marriages.

The Knights of Columbus issued a report on the thirteenth year of their advertising program. They received 388,852 inquiries for the year ending June 30. This is an average of almost 7,500 per week. The aggregate since the inauguration of the program came to 4,101,065. Enrollments for Catholic instruction by mail, which have consistently averaged in excess of one for each ten inquiries, amounted to 429,317.

In 1958 a Gallup Poll asked this question:

"If your party nominated a generally well qualified man for President, and he happened to be a Catholic, would you vote for him?" 68% said yes. 25% said no. And 7% were undecided. This means that three years ago one person in four was against voting for his party's nominee if he was a Catholic. The same question was asked a short time ago and the results were encouragingly different. 82% said yes. 13% said no. 5% were undecided. It appears that today only about one in eight would refuse to vote for his party's nominee if he was a Catholic.

The percentage of Catholics in the total population of the United States is 23.87%. The diocese with the highest percentage is Providence, Rhode Island. It has 61.64%. And the diocese with the lowest is Raleigh, North Carolina. It has only .93%.

JOHN J. KEATING, C.S.P.



# TESTED CONVERT MATERIAL

1. THE PARISH PRIEST'S GUIDE TO INQUIRY CLASSES \$5.95  
Ed. Rev. John Mitchell, C.S.P. One of the most complete and practical books ever published to help the parish priest organize and conduct effective classes. 256 pp.
2. HANDBOOK FOR NEW CATHOLICS \$2.00  
By Rev. Aloysius Burggraff, C.S.P. Things a convert must know which cannot be covered in basic instructions. 189 pp.
3. A CATECHISM FOR INQUIRERS 35¢  
By Rev. Joseph I. Malloy, C.S.P. One of our most popular. 94 pp.
4. LIFE IN CHRIST \$1.00  
By Revs. James Killgallon and Gerard Weber. Positive kerygmatic approach, prepares for parish life. 287 pp.
5. A CATHOLIC CATECHISM \$1.50  
First American edition of famous German catechism used throughout world in over 20 languages. Kerygmatic approach. 414 pp.
6. OUTLINES OF CATHOLIC TEACHING \$2.10  
By Rev. John J. Keating, C.S.P. Covers all essential points in a series of outlines for 24 lectures. 224 pp.
7. ABOVE OUTLINES in 24 separate leaflets, for class distribution. Each set of 24, \$1.25
7. NEW TESTAMENT 95¢  
Confraternity translation. Paperback, 550 pp.
8. NEW TESTAMENT 65¢  
Confraternity translation. Colorful hard cover, 480 pp.
9. THE QUESTION BOX \$1.45  
By Rev. Bertrand L. Conway, C.S.P. World-famous full size edition, answers 1,000 questions. Paperback, 1961 completely revised edition.
10. MINIATURE QUESTION BOX 75¢  
By Rev. Bertrand L. Conway, C.S.P. Abridged edition of the famous Question Box, in handy pocket size. 249 pp.
11. PAULIST CORRESPONDENCE COURSE 75¢  
Based on "I Believe" by Rev. Wilfred G. Hurley, C.S.P. 212 pp.
12. 6 TEST KEY LEAFLETS on above, with answer leaflet. Set, 50¢
- BOOKMARKS—8 pp., bookmark size 2-3/4" x 5-3/4"  
5¢ each, 100 for \$4.50, 200 for 8.00
13. HOW TO GO TO CONFESSION
14. HOW TO PRAY THE ROSARY
15. COMMON CATHOLIC PRAYERS

## PAULIST INSTITUTE FOR RELIGIOUS RESEARCH

411 West 59th Street, New York 19, N. Y. (G261)

Send quantities indicated of following convert material, and bill me

1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_\_\_  
6 \_\_\_\_\_ 6a \_\_\_\_\_ 7 \_\_\_\_\_ 8 \_\_\_\_\_ 9 \_\_\_\_\_  
10 \_\_\_\_\_ 11 \_\_\_\_\_ 11a \_\_\_\_\_ 12 \_\_\_\_\_ 13 \_\_\_\_\_  
14 \_\_\_\_\_

NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
CHURCH \_\_\_\_\_  
STREET \_\_\_\_\_  
CITY \_\_\_\_\_ ZONE \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_

20% discount on orders for \$10.00 or more of above material only

PLEASE SEND CATALOGUE OF ADDITIONAL MATERIAL.....



# THE GOOD NEWS OF CHRIST

## WHAT IT IS

24 full-color film strips, each with a study guide and a 33-1/3 rpm. vinylite recording (12 minutes); in 4 parts of 6 film strips each, with 3 records in each part, packaged in an attractive durable box for storing or shelving. These film strips are rich in doctrine, artistic in production, and kerygmatic in approach.

## WHAT IT IS FOR

Today Catholic instructors are turning to the Bible and to liturgy for a concrete presentation of Catholic doctrine. These film strips facilitate this biblical and liturgical teaching of religion. They have been endorsed by convert instructors . . . and may also be used for societies, clubs and schools.

## WHAT IT COSTS

Each part costs \$60. The total cost for all four parts is \$240. A good part of this expense can be defrayed by taking a silver collection at showings for societies and clubs. Some instructors have paid for visual aids by a limited number of direct appeals.

**TEN DAY FREE TRIAL . . . . . SEND COUPON BELOW**

Please send **THE GOOD NEWS OF CHRIST** as checked below, and bill me. I understand that if I am not fully satisfied, I may return this material to you within 10 days and owe you nothing.

(Check below)

_____ Complete set	\$240.00
_____ Part 1. The Hidden Life of Christ	60.00
_____ Part 2. The Public Life of Christ	60.00
_____ Part 3. The Public Life of Christ	60.00
_____ Part 4. The Redemption Fulfilled	60.00

**FILL IN NAME AND ADDRESS ON OTHER SIDE . . . . .**